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ABSTRACT

While Asians in the United States continue to experience the discriminatory barriers that other minorities face, the myth that Asian Americans are a well-adjusted model minority has resulted in public neglect of the problems of this group. To a significant extent, the myth arises from the fact that Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian groups have often responded to exclusionary American policies and discriminatory practices with docility, submissiveness, tolerance, concession, and accommodation, rather than with protest, dispute, and obstruction. These responses appear to be rooted in Asian culture, which emphasizes respect for authority, filial piety, and suppression of emotions and physical aggression, as well as in Asian Americans' psychological attitudes, such as their view of themselves as being temporary residents in America, their tendency to withdraw from conflict, and their hopes for eventual integration in American society. Recent trends indicate that efforts are being made to dispel the myth of Asian Americans as a successful minority group and to show that income, employment, and educational inequalities have had negative effects on this population. Asian Americans should participate actively in these efforts and in movements to rectify inequalities and demand their rights in American society. (MJL)

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The Psychological and Cultural Aspects of Political Participation of Asian Americans

by
Moon H. Jo

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It has long been fashionable among social scientists, early as well as contemporary, to study the problems of adjustment of various race and ethnic groups, particularly those minority groups having serious problems of assimilation such as the Black, Chicano, and American Indian. Few social scientists, however, have shown serious interest in studying such Asian Americans as Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese, much less other Asian minority groups, because they were not usually considered "minority" as it was assumed that they had already attained some measure of economic success. They have been labeled "whiter than white" and held up as "model minorities" which, in turn, projects an image of a well-adjusted group well on its way to becoming integrated into the main stream of society.

The success of Asian minority groups is often judged in terms of their median income, their professions and their occupations. Seldom are the problems of underemployment, advancement in occupation, overt and covert discrimination in housing and other subtle forms of discrimination openly discussed and made known to the public. Unbeknownst to the public, many first generation Asians and recent arrivals from Asian countries are experiencing inadequate housing and social services, job discrimination, and youth problems. In the past a few Asian American social scientists attempted to vanquish the myth that Asian Americans are "minorities without problems" or "model minorities" and to sensitize the American public to the fact that the problems of Asian minority groups are real and thus must be examined from the broader perspective of the process of assimilation.

Race relations between whites and Blacks are well documented and various types of intergroup relation theories are formulated on the basis of such relations. As the Black minority became more and more defiant and militant toward the dominant group, government agencies and research organizations

in academia have begun to pay more attention to the causes, processes, and future directions of the activities and expressions of this minority group.

Asian Americans suffered no less than other minority groups in this country. The history of emotional feelings against Asians, particularly the Japanese and the Chinese, has long been deep-rooted in American society. Since their arrival in this country in the early 19th century, they have suffered from all forms of racial barriers: prejudice, discrimination, segregation, isolation, rejection, exclusion, and even genocide. Yet they have perservered despite all of these forms of maltreatment and have seldom formed organized resistance movements against white racism. Such docility and compliant attitudes have perpetuated the myth that the Asians are minorities without problems, and consequently few social scientists pay significant attention to these minority groups which appear to be so well assimilated.

In this paper I will explore some of the factors which might have contributed to the ostensibly submissive attitude on the part of Asian Americans, particularly the Chinese and Japanese Americans. Compelling evidence to support the arguments I present here and thus help to explain the political docility of these groups is still in the process of being gathered. Yet through interweaving historical experiences of these two groups, one may still show patterns of intergroup relationships between the oppressed and the oppressor and arrive at some tentative conclusions concerning their mode of behavior.

Oppression in the Past

The Chinese Experience - The Chinese immigration to the United States began around 1850. The discovery of gold in California was a major force which attracted Chinese from the mainland. As the gold rush tapered off in the early 1860's, the bulk of Chinese immigrants were employed as railroad workers during the period from 1864 to 1869. When the gold mining and railroad construction ended, many of them were out of jobs, and those who found employment were engaged in "women's jobs," such as domestic service, laundry work, and work in restaurants and in small retail stores catering principally to other Chinese.[1]

As the number of Chinese increased during the period of the gold rush and railroad construction, they became competitors with white workers and also became the target of severe forms of discrimination involving legislation, retricting the rights of Chinese immigrants and citizens, the use of mob violence, vigilante groups, and spur-of-the-moment tribunals to intimidate the new arrivals. They were ridiculed because of their strange customs and their ghetto life style suggested unassimilability to the dominant culture. As they vied for the scarce jobs in railroad construction, the allegation of coolie labor by the white trade and labor organizations coupled with racism, and its stereotyping and accentuating of biological differences became quite common phenomena.

The anti-Chinese sentiment led California to pass "An Act to Prevent the Further Immigration of Chinese, Mongolians, Indians, and Blacks" and prevent them from entering public schools. Also in 1860 laws were imposed taxing

Chinese fishermen, and in 1862 there was a stiff "police Tax" imposed on all Chinese adults who had not previously paid the foreign miners' tax.[2]

Nor was the Federal government idle in its restricting of Chinese immigration. In 1882, the Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which suspended Chinese immigration for ten years, and in 1892 it extended the Act for another ten years. Renewals and extentions of the act effectively prohibited immigration from China until 1943, when quota systems were established, allowing only 105 Chinese to enter the U.S. each year. As a result of these harsh restrictive acts, the population growth of this minority was almost standstill. In 1880 there were 105,465 Chinese in the U.S. and in 1950 there were 117,629. The Chinese population rapidly increased in this country when the 1965 Immigration Act lifted the quota system. By the year 1970, there were more than 430,000 Chinese in the United States.

Harassing and restrictive legislative acts which were imposed by the state and Federal government were not only revulsions the Chinese had to face, they also met bitter resentment from school, labor, and private and public sectors of business organizations. The life style of Chinese immigrants under such duress was poignantly described by early historians and other students of Asian studies. Lyman succinctly summarizes the treatment of these Chinese. "In short, there were no elites who favored the Chinese. Scorned by officials, patronized by missionaries, defamed by labor leaders, and battered by mobs, the Chinese suffered nearly the full panoply of injustice that a racist society could impose."[3]

The vicious anti-Chinese stereotyping was no less unrelenting than the discriminatory behavior of the whites. The polemics against the Chinese were inflammatory, and allegations against their character and culture were greatly exaggerated. Futhermore, mass media reinforced the public's stereotypes of the Chinese by referring to them as superstitious, dishonest, cruel, and marginal members of the human race.[4]

In spite of the well documented cruelty of treatment of the Chinese immigrant, there is a conspicuous lack of any sign of resistance movement on the part of the Chinese to this oppression and injustice by the majority. Lyman lists the many Chinese organizations which existed in the past such as clan associations, guilds, secret societies, and hui kuan (mutual aid society), most of which were concerned with religious, commercial, fraternal, adjudicative, and charitable stewardship of the members themselves.[5] Their activities were wide in scope but were confined for the most part to Chinatown. They neither sought to alter, oppose, or subvert the national political structure of the United States, nor did they challenge white racism. However, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, a confederation of hui kuan, clan, and secret societies, did act as an unofficial supragovernment exercising overall community domination inside Chinatown and existed as the most important voice of the Chinese speaking to the American community and its officials. In addition to their usual concern with stewardship over their members, it frequently protected Chinese against the legal impositions and social indignities heaped upon them, and it did protest America's exclusionist immigration practice.[6]

The overall response of the Chinese to the systematic oppression by the ideology of white racism was one of meekness and compliance. There were no organized group resistances to foster face to face confrontation. The mild protest by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association did not have remarkable success in preventing the passage of discriminatory laws or of revoking already existing one.

The Japanese Experience - The Japanese inherited much of the discrimination which had been directed against the Chinese. The Japanese who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1890's succeeded the Chinese as laborers in the mines and on the railroads and worked at low wages with poor working conditions. With their visibility on the West Coast, the Japanese became targets for wide-ranging

discriminatory legislation similar to that used against the Chinese.

By invoking the U.S. Immigration Act of 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed that all Japanese and Korean laborers who had received passports to Mexico, Canada, or Hawaii will be prohibited from entering the U.S.[7] The following year the U.S. and the Japanese governments concluded the "Gentlemen's Agreement" whereby the Japanese government would issue passports to U.S.-bound Japanese nationals only if they were former residents; parents, children, or wives of residents; or intending to assume active control of an already existing interest in a farming enterprise in this country.[8]

The exclusive policy against the Japanese continued. The 1924 Immigration Act denied admission to aliens ineligible for citizenship, which included those who were not free white persons and aliens of African descent. The passage of McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 established the quota system based on national origin and allowed all Asian immigrants to become naturalized citizens of the U.S. Such a quota system was replaced by the 1965 national quota system which allowed by nation an average of 20,000 immigrants a year.

Inasmuch as racism in America has a firm economic basis and was one of the means of justifying and perpetuating inequality and exploitation, the oppression of the Japanese immigrants was not limited to legal processes. After World War I, in the context of the general repression represented in the Palmer raids and the anti-communist hysteria, the scope of anti-Japanese attacks was widened. For the first time, leadership of the agitation was controlled by agricultural interests, notably the California State Farm Bureau Federation and the Grange. A broad coalition of organized labor, agricultural groups, patriotic societies, and political organizations worked between 1919 and 1924 to achieve the exclusion of Japanese immigration.[9]

Many Japanese were denied licenses to fish, to own businesses, and to participate in labor and political organizations because of their alien status.

The anti-Chinese prejudice from a few years earlier was quickly applied to the Japanese. The anti-Japanese campaign reached such a point that in 1906 there were attacks on Japanese people in the streets and Japanese shops and restaurants were attacked by gangs of young whites.[10] When the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroyed a number of city schools with the resulting overcrowding of existing schools, the school board decided that one way to reduce the overcrowding was to separate the "mongol hordes" into segregated schools.

The Japanese, excluded from industrial jobs, often turned to farming. They soon became competitors with the white landowners as their landholdings increased. In 1913 the California legislature passed the Alien Land Act designed to halt Japanese land acquisition. The law prevented aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning land and permitted them to lease land for no longer than three years.

The Alien Land Act quieted anti-Japanese sentiment for approximately 15 years, until December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. In 1942 President Roosevelt issued an executive order that all persons of Japanese descent be placed in relocation camps. As a consequence, 119,000 Japanese Americans, both citizens and aliens, were uprooted and imprisoned in the intermountain and southwestern states. The action was justified on grounds of "military necessity."[11]

The Japanese, unlike the Chinese, showed some signs of resistance. There were some incidences of organized demonstrations by the Issei (the first generation) and Nisei (the second generation), leading boycotts to counter the boycotts of Japanese products, publishing books, and enlisting support of sympathetic whites. In relocation camps, the resistance movement, both active and passive, did occur much more frequently and significantly than is generally known. Protest rallies, demonstrations, work stoppages, even general strikes of evacuees took place at all camps around the issues of living conditions.[12] Yet if one examines the camp life of the relocation centers carefully, he finds that there

were no attempts to escape, nor any examples of violent resistance, and there was rarely any sustained mass civil disobedience. Most of the evacuees were resigned to their fate. The cooperation, instead of violent confrontation, was even instigated by the Japanese American Citizens' League, which was the largest single organization that claimed to fight for the rights of the Japanese minorities.

In spite of recorded incidences of resistance to the oppression, for the most part the Japanese seemed to endure the hardships without expressions of sorrow or anguish, leaving many whites to believe that the oppression of the minority group had only an inconsequential impact upon a "stoic" people. Ima summarizes the Japanese response to the racial oppression...they exhibited a low profile with surprisingly little evidence of overt counteraggression.[13]

Factors Associated with the Chinese and Japanese Minority Suppression of Resistance

Although Asian immigrants were denied the rights of citizenship, forbidden to own land, locked in concentration camps, maligned, mistreated, and even massacred, they opted for toleration rather than protest, concession rather than dispute, and accommodation rather than obstruction. To many social scientists the reaction of the two minorities is still very puzzling and there are many unanswered questions as to the reasons for their almost fatalistic resignation to this type of oppression.

Cultural Factors - The culture of the Chinese and Japanese societies are replete with norms, values and ideologies which rendered less likely an easy adjustment of the Asian American immigrants to American society, let alone a psychological readiness to challenge and resist racial oppression. Their culture is characterized by filial piety, obedience to authority, family responsibility, simple frugality and in addition suppression of real emotional feeling and physical aggressiveness. Since these do not conduce to retaliation, they probably contributed either directly or indirectly to Asian docility in the face of the systematic exclusionist policy adopted by the whites.

The early Chinese immigrants inherited many of their norms from ideologies such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Confucianism's great emphasis was on family responsibility and obedience to superiors, Taoism's stress was on the natural way of living without artificial restraints by society. Buddhism's imposition of simplicity as a way of life eliminated desires for goods, riches and power, all of which cause suffering in its view. These were all very much a part of Chinese life. The elements of these recessive characteristics of culture contrasted drastically with the rugged individualistic, adventuresome, entrepreneural culture which prevailed in the early westward expansionist era. The contrasting culture not only made the Chinese difficult to assimilate but also engendered misunderstanding between the two groups.

The Chinese traditional respect for authority, in this case the U.S. government, simplicity of living, suppression of feeling and other intrapunitive qualities, no doubt, encouraged the whites to exploit the seemingly quiet, docile, and meek immigrants; and the Chinese, in turn, cut as many ties with the hostile white world as possible and withdrew into family and community life to which they could easily relate. Chinatown offered protection from racist terrorism. But more importantly, it was the place where cultural and social institutions could be maintained.

The Japanese were in many ways the products of a similar society. Filial duty, conformity, and obedience to authority are paramount values of Japanese society. In describing the "success" story of the Japanese Americans in the United States, Caudill attributes such success to the similarity between the key elements which shaped Japanese culture and the contemporary middle class white culture. Such elements of culture include politeness, respect for authority and parental wishes, duty to community, sensitivity to cues from the external world, and suppression of real feelings.[14] Petersen also provides a variation of the same theme by noting that the elements of diligence in work, simple

frugality, and filial piety found in the Tokugawa religion are similar to what has been called "the P otestant Ethic" in western culture.[15] Still others interpreted the Japanese withdrawal and self-containment in this country as being derived from the samurai ethic. Lyman notes that there can be little doubt that the fundamental source of the Nisei character is to be found in the samurai ethic which emphasize loyalty to the lord and the detachment of the self from others.[16] It should be pointed out that the comparison of culture between the two countries is difficult to accomplish as there is more diversity between the two than similarity. Even though there are similarities in key elements of culture, they must be examined in the context of each particular society.

Although some may find similarity between the elements of the Japanese culture and the white middle class culture, the norms and values of the Japanese seldom generated counter aggressiveness, but rather an unpretentious and adaptive attitude such as: "minding one's own affairs" except where his family and other primary groups were concerned. One of the byproducts of Japanese culture is the "enryo" syndrome. The concept originally referred to the manner in which "inferiors" were supposed to behave to "superiors," i.e., through deference and obsequiousness. As with many norms, however, the meaning and the use eventually expanded to cover a variety of situations--from how to behave toward whites, to what to do in ambiguous situations, to cover moments of confusion, embarrassment, and anxiety.[17] Such emphasis on nonpresumptuousness and diffidence reflected lack of self-confidence and excessive timidity to their oppressor. Kitano summarizes the effect of "enryo" syndrome upon the docility of the Japanese during the wartime evacuation.

> It is our belief that the combination of a Japanese culture emphasizing norms, or the "how to behave" aspects of life, coupled with the content of the norms such as "enryo" syndrome, help to achieve understanding of Japanese behavior in the United States. The cooperative, docile behavior of the Japanese during the wartime evacuation is an example of the consequences of socialization within this pattern.[18]

The lingering effect of the Japanese culture affected very much the behavior of the second generation during the racial oppression and confinement in camps.

Burma notes that some Nisei leaders were very often liberal, progressive, or radical, and, moreover, that their attitudes were often not carried over into aggressive action because such behavior would call down censure from the by-no-means impotent Issei, and because of the tradition that no Japanese leader should assert himself too strongly or too often or place himself in the limelight too frequently.[19]

Psychological Factors

(1) Sojourner Attitude - The initial Japanese and Chinese immigrants did not plan on settling in the United States; their dream was to amass capital and return home. Their prevailing attitude was to perservere in the face of difficult times and hope for a bright future when they return to their native land. Such an attitude weakened the possibility or desire to form political action groups to counter attack the oppression, and it reinforced their maintenance of low profile. At the same time it encouraged the white dominant group to continue to exploit as they were regarded as temporary visitors, socially undesirable and politically insignificant.

The sojourner attitude also dampened the tendency of the immigrants to assimilate either culturally or structurally, which, in turn, further isolated them from the mainstream of the society, and they became the targets of misunderstanding and scapegoating. They were regarded as outside invaders, coolies, undesirable aliens, whose stay in the United States was solely to earn money and return.

This attitude toward viewing the Asians as visitors has never diminished in the minds of the majority of white Americans, and this still disturbs and torments many Asians Americans who were born in this country. Li, a Chinese social scientist, regards this attitude as one of the major stumbling blocks toward the full integration of Chinese into American society.[20] Modell suggests that, in retrospect, the Issei tended to define the rebuffs which they had experienced

as not being too serious, because they have never adopted a view of their stay here conforming to the assimilationist ideal,[21] probably suggesting that their nonconformity stems from their attitude of staying temporarily.

(2) Overwhelming Pressure - Social scientists often suggest that when conflict occurs between any two groups, the weaker group may challenge the stronger one until it stands on equal footing; it may accommodate the wishes of the stronger one through compromise; or still further it may ignore the dominant group by withdrawing from further contact and seeking autonomy. Asian immigrants opted for the third choice: withdrawal. They withdrew to such an extreme point that they were systematically eliminated from the dominant society. One can only conjecture as to what extent the withdrawal symptom coupled with mild and meek personality was the result of their cultural backgrounds and to what extent it developed through adjusting to long years of overwhelming racial pressure.

Kitano observed that many Japanese held low expectations for any type of "break" (equality) in America so that the wartime evacuation was viewed as a validation of this point of view: "What else can a poor Japanese expect in America?" He also states that others used the explanation of "it can't be helped" so that the fate of an individual was tied to forces beyond one's control.[22] He summarizes the feeling of powerlessness of the overwhelming racial pressure, particularly during the wartime evacuation:

> There were no models of resistance or of rebellion--some turned to Caucasian friends, who invariably counseled cooperation. Therefore, with no one to turn to, with their structures and institutions dismantled, with little political or economic power, with cultural norms and values emphasizing conformity, and nonconflictual behavior, with a lack of feasible alternatives and facing the awesome might and power of the United States government, the Japanese marched into camp. Could they really have done otherwise?[23]

Often a modest and compliant personality, either as result of their culture or long years of racial oppression, generates an ambivalent feeling about the self. In an influential and controversial article, psychologists Stanley Sue and Derald Wing Sue found among Chinese Americans excessive feelings of guilt, self-hatred, and a diminished sense of self-worth.[24] Ben Tong amplified this, arguing

that Chinese, by adjusting to American racism, developed "meek and mild" personalities and passed them on to their children.[25] Jerry Surh writes of the smoldering resentment and anger among Asian Americans, especially among those who have only recently become aware of their situation. This stands in sharp contrast to the calm and placid surface with which most Asian Americans present themselves to society.[26]

The problem with psychological insights--however accurate they may be--is their uncertain impact on actual behavior, in this case a desire to resist racial oppression. One can only speculate that such a withdrawal of Asian immigrants in the face of oppression bred contemptuous attitudes toward Asians on the part of the white majority. Their withdrawal also imparted the feeling of inferiority on the part of the Asians and further generated the fear of retaliation and revenge from the white dominant group in addition to feelings of political powerlessness. The lingering effect of such fear and uncertainty was so prevalent, for example, that it took the Japanese American Citizen's League 34 years to get the notorious Japanese internment order rescinded.

(3) Hope for Integration - Perhaps one should be cautious in attributing the early Asian immigrant's lack of self-confidence, excessive timidity, and adaptive attitude to cultural and other factors associated with racial oppression. One may also speculate that their reluctance to assert themselves, to avoid confrontation tactics, and their continuing to embrace the order and norms of the white mainstream, is perhaps an indication of their attempt to achieve their ultimate goal: eventual integration.

The Chinese and the Japanese immigrants came to this country not as indentured slaves or coolies. They came as free laborers, and perhaps many thought that when they would decide to stay in the U.S. permanently they would be accepted eventually by the whites. This feeling probably led them to the view that one must not rock the boat by seeking equality and acceptance. By hard work, perserverence, avoiding competition, "knowing their place," they would attempt to convince the whites of their acceptability and desirability.

The Chinese immigrants, faced with severe job discrimination, worked in restaurants, sweatshops, and laundries in Chinatown. The Japanese concentration in California truck farming before World War II was another example of the avoidance of direct competition. Few Asian immigrants aspired to an elite position; most seemed content with being tolerated by the larger society and allowed to carve out rather modest successes. Their attitudes have been characterized as unassuming and submissive, an adaptive mechanism to insure survival in an environment where racism was never far beneath the surface.

Kitano notes that during the wartime evacuation some Japanese Americans cooperated more than 100 percent in order to prove their loyalty to the United States. Many joined the 442d Regimental Combat Team and performed heroic deeds.[27] The virtues of hard work, thrift, lack of aggression and high conformity to the norms and even loyalty during the war no doubt have aided the Japanese to appear as excellent candidates for equality in the eyes of Caucasians, and many Japanese no doubt felt that to some extent they had succeeded in gaining acceptance into the larger American society. Former Congresswoman Patsy Mink reaffirmed the unswerving hope of the Japanese immigrants for integration during the war at the centennial of Japanese immigration to Hawaii.

> The Japanese Americans suffered from Exclusion Acts, Alien Land Laws, the relocation camp experience, and discrimination. Yet, the astounding truth is that despite all of this, a persecuted minority--classified as "enemy" during the war--refused to believe that America did not offer them the best opportunities to be free, secure, prosperous, and happy. ..I believe this struggle for acceptance as Americans has been won...[28]

To some extent, the Japanese convinced the white majority to admit its past mistakes and to offer friendship. In February, 1967, at the 25th anniversary of the beginning of evacuation of the Japanese, eight California state senators joined to present Senate Resolution No. 101 which recognized that the Japanese Americans prevailed over adversity and proved their loyalty and worth by rebuilding their lives after the war. On the basis of these commendations, the Senate resolved that the members take the opportunity to express sincere friendship and good will toward Japanese Americans.[29]

The extent to which the strategy of maintaining a low profile or a "don't rock the boat" attitude was predicated on a future acceptance encouraging the white dominant group to realize its errors is difficult to fathom. It is probably too naive to assume that the Asians' suffering of indignities and hardships in the past was merely to prove their loyalty and dedication to this country. It is also too much of a price to pay for acceptance. Yet one cannot assume that the diffidence model strategy adopted by the Asian immigrants was without any purpose and solely derived from their culture and long years of racial oppression.

Current Trend - As the influx of Asian immigrants has increased since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, their problems of adjustment in this country have also intensified. Many Asian Americans were deeply involved because of their firm belief that the great social upheaval in the 1960's was not necessarily a purely Black phenomenon, but was also a fight for basic human rights of peoples of color in this white dominated society. The older generation still tends to play the role of the "quiet American" and "loyal American." But the younger generation have been most articulate for their quest for opportunity, human rights, justice, and basic pluralism in this country.

Many students of Asian studies are no longer content with the label attached to Asian minority groups such as "successful" minority of "minority without problems." The debunking of the myth of a model Asian minority group is becoming a fashionable subject among social scientists. Some social scientists list various case studies of discrimination and injustices from which Asian Americans still suffer, while other social scientists point out the practice of discrimination and infringement of human rights with firm data. Most frequently Asians complain about subtle discrimination by the white. For example:

> Japanese Americans are almost invisible in power positions: Of some 1,600 mainland colleges and universities, only one has a Japanese American president (Mr. Hayakawa, now a senator from California); although there are

20,000 school districts on the mainland, no Japanese American superintendent of schools; and there are only 20 Orientals among the 5,500 civil service employes in "supergrade," or top federal positions.[30]

We are no longer laboring in the fields, but we are now nothing more than technological coolies who are systematically denied management positions in most white enterprises.[31]

Cases such as these may extend to many Chinese and other Asian Americans. Betty Sung, a Chinese American social scientist, cites numerous cases of subtle discrimination. One of the cases is as follows:

Mrs. Moy, who had worked for fifteen years in budget department at McCellan Air Force Base. She held the rank of GS-11, but for nine years had received no promotion. Mrs. Moy filed a complaint. The official reason given for not promoting her was that she could not communicate with others because of her Oriental accent. However, according to her attorney, "Mrs. Moy speaks precisely and her grammar is impeccable.[32]

As larger percentages of Asian Americans are employed as professionals, complaints increase concerning difficulty of promotion in their profession. They tend to reach a level far short of middle-management and executive positions. When it comes to promotions into supervisory or managerial ranks, they are often passed over on the pretext that they are deficient in English or socially unpresentable. Asian social scientists contend that in large work organizations virtually no Asian is located in decision-making positions.

One still can debunk the myth of "successful" minority groups on the basis of solid data, such as the U.S. census. If one compares closely the economic status of the Japanese and Chinese Americans with that of the total U.S. population, one finds that underemployment and inequality continue to exist. In the U.S. there are 1.5 men and 1.0 women in the professional managerial occupations for every man and woman who has completed at least four years of college. For the Japanese, the rates are 1.3 men and 0.9 women, and in the Chinese population they are 1.1 men and 0.7 women.[33]

The median family income of Japanese families in 1970 was more than $13,000, and thus $3,000 higher than the median for the entire U.S. But in over half of

the Japanese families both husbands and wives work, compared to only 39% of all families in the U.S. in which both husbands and wives work. Furthermore, compared to the total U.S. population, the median year of schooling for the Japanese of 16 years of age and over is 12.5 years, which is 0.4 year higher than the total U.S. population.[34] In view of this one would expect that the median family income of Japanese families would be higher than the $13,000 figure.

A somewhat similar picture is also presented in the case of the Chinese population. The median income of Chinese families is $1,000 higher than the median income for the total U.S. But again almost half the wives (48%) in Chinese husband/wife families are employed, compared to only 39 percent in the total population. Also the median income of Chinese families whose heads immigrated to the U.S. before 1925 was $7,400 and, after 1965, $7,300. This is considerably lower than the median income of the total U.S. population. These figures are indications of the greater economic problems faced by both elderly Chinese and those who are recent immigrants. Furthermore, the national rate of poverty among Chinese families is 10 percent, which is close to the rate for the total U.S.: 11 percent. In New York City, the rate of poverty for Chinese is much higher: 15 percent.[35]

Debunking the myth of the "success story" of the Asians still continues. A state report concerning the San Francisco Civil Service stated that job discrimination exists against Asians and other minorities, especially at the higher levels. Statistics show that while 65 percent of the total white employees earn over $800 a month, only 50 percent of the total Asian employees reach that amount.[36] Betty Sung also reveals that 59.6 percent of white male college graduates have a personal income of $10,000 or more, whereas the black and Chinese male trail far behind with 35.3 percent and 38.3 percent respectively.[37]

No doubt, in general Asian Americans are relatively "well off" compared with those race and ethnic groups who haven't "made it" such as Blacks, Chicanos, and

Indians. But economically they fall below the whites--despite their superior education and occupational status. Lan summarizes the dilemma of Asian Americans: "Rather than being victimized by more obvious acts of overt racism, Asian Americans are subject to the subtleties of what a follow-up to the Kerner Commission Report identifies as institutional subordination, and what Louis Knowles in his book Institutional Racism in America, asserts is institutional racism."[38]

More and more Asian Americans, students and scholars alike, are willing to discuss their plight openly despite the honorific title of "model Americans" imposed upon them by the whites. Many organizations are formed at local and national levels to counteract the injustices applied to them. Strategies of various sort, some norm-oriented and some value-oriented, are proposed by these organizations and yet, it appears, none of the organizations has had major impact on changing attitudes of the whites toward Asians.

Stirred by the Black student movement,the anti-war movement, and civil rights movement of the 1960's, the Asians in this country formed coalition groups to counteract racist attitudes. For example, Asian students started their own Asian American movement. They organized the Asian American Political Alliance on college campuses on the West Coast and the Asian American for Action on college campuses on the East Coast. These groups demanded establishments of Asian American studies at the universities and lectured Asian students to awaken an Asian American consciousness so that they would fight for equal rights.[39] I Wor Keun (Society for Righteousness and Harmony) was another organization which also professed to deal with crowded living conditions, unemployment, poor health, long hours of work, and crime. Their goal was to unite the Asian American working class and the working class of the larger society.[40] To these groups, radical political resistance is the only road that will make it possible to address the full scope of the Asian American problems.

There are also associations which are norm-oriented movements such as the Organization of Chinese Americans that is organized by businessmen and

professionals. Its function is similar to the Japanese American Citizen's League and its programs are both of a social and a political nature. They include a legal rights fund and affirmative action for Asian Americans, and it also sponsors various sporting events and festivals to promote understanding among the Chinese Americans.[41] Also in 1972, The Pacific Asian Coalition was organized in San Francisco. It is the first national coalition of Pacific and Asian peoples to exist in the United States. Its objective is to provide a power base for Americans of Pacific and Asian ancestry to deal with issues that affect them, particularly those relating to the poor.[42]

To what extent these organizations will be effective in dealing with the various issues Asians are confronted with in the future is yet to be determined. However, it is obvious that many Asian Americans began to realize that middle class status did not mean total social or economic acceptance into American society. Unlike the early Asian immigrants, the second and the third generation Asians would like to rectify injustices even in the face of challenge through activities of an organized nature.

The lack of coalition among Asian minority groups was apparent among early immigrants; probably this was due to the animosity which existed between the Japanese and the Chinese because of the war which existed between the two countries. Now, particularly among the young generation, they are now beginning to achieve their objective of equality through the coalition of all Asians regardless of their national identity.

The future trend of the Asian American movement would be more confrontation with issues, more challenge to the social injustices, more demand for their rights, and more participation in the society at all levels. To accomplish all of these goals, Asian Americans will take an active part in the political processes of government.

Footnotes

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